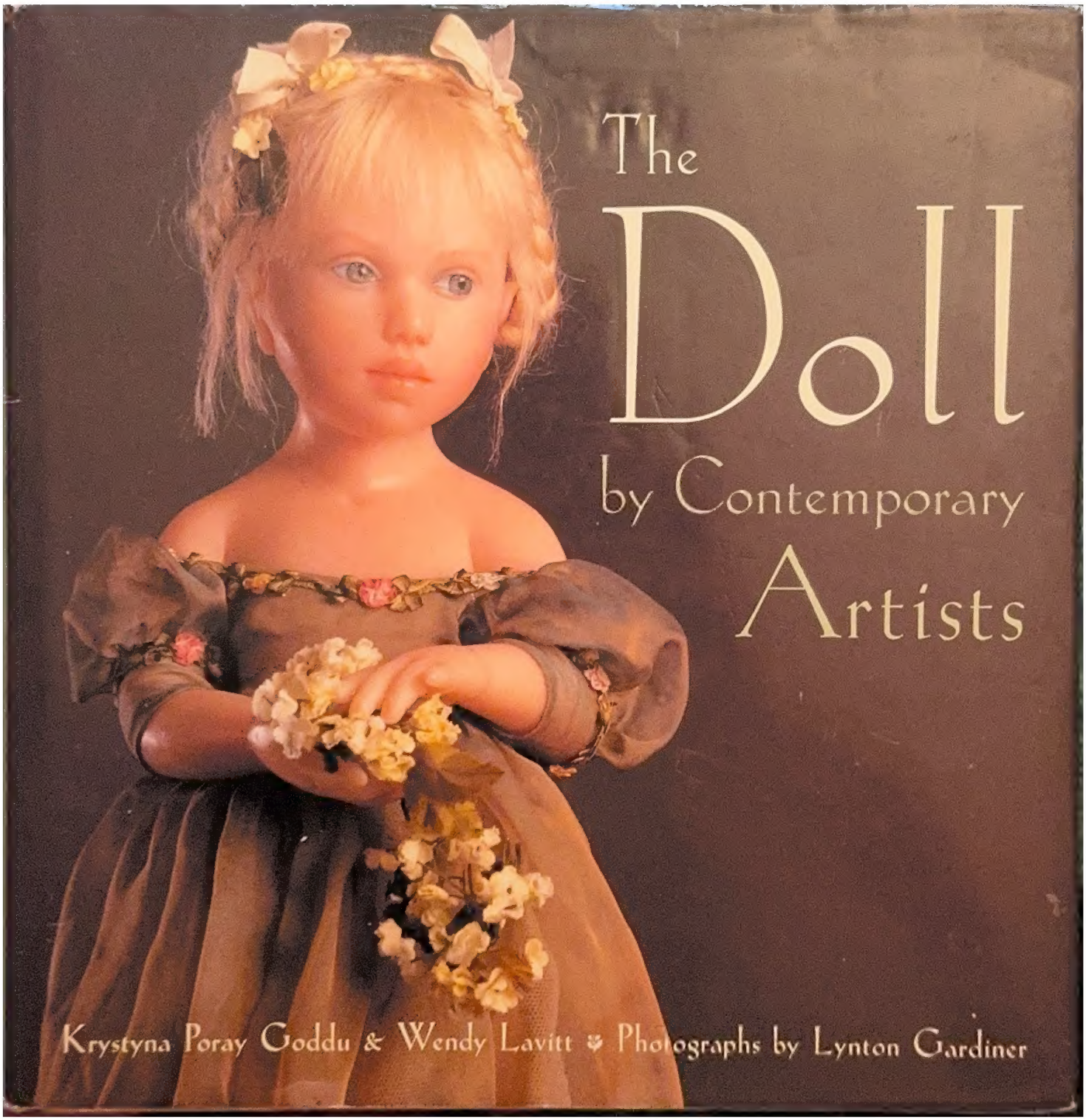
The
Doll
by Contemporary
Artists
Krystyna Poray Goddu & Wendy Lavitt
Photographs by Lynton Gardiner

Contents

Preface ❦ 6

Early Artists ❦ 8

Portraits of Real People ❦ 28

Figures from Literature ❦ 50

Holiday Inspirations ❦ 68

Reflections of Cultural Diversity ❦ 90

Contemporary Children ❦ 110

Women of the Imagination ❦ 132

Characters ❦ 152

Fantasies ❦ 170

Beyond Dolls ❦ 192

Appendices ❦ 212

Glossary · The Artists · Bibliography · Sources

Index ❦ 223

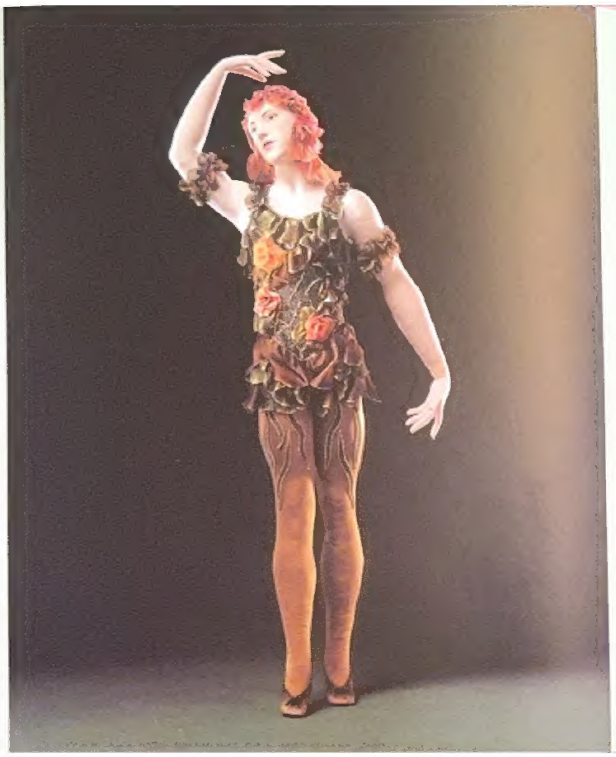

Plate 10
Alexander and Marina Rovenian, *Vidas Nijinsky*, 20 in. (50.8 cm), 1993

Portraits of Real People

For generations dolls have been made to represent real people, chronicling a moment in the lives of historical personages, celebrities, and ordinary folk. Today's portrait doll artists continue the tradition of realistic depiction as well as artistic interpretation. To capture the essence of their subjects, these artists must be adept at portraying such nebulous qualities as attitude and stance in the faces and bodies of their dolls. The best portrait dolls evoke emotional responses as they mirror life's vicissitudes on a miniature scale.

A number of doll artists specialize in historical figures. These makers share a special gift for expressing the mood of a particular period in history combined with a love of research that can involve months of study in libraries

Growing up in the small community of Naples in the 1950s, McNichols was the daughter of the owners of the town's only art gallery. Fortunately, she was encouraged in her endeavors by artists who exhibited at the gallery. After graduating from high school, McNichols attended a performing arts school before transferring to the Ringling Art School in Sarasota, Florida. Dollmaking, which had once been a hobby, became an art as McNichols studied porcelain, painting, and drawing from Florida teachers.

As McNichols defined her art, she often chose as subjects the Seminoles, whom she admired for their strength and independence. "The Seminoles have many unique characteristics," she notes. "Their colorful clothing and distinctive hairstyles and jewelry make them wonderful subjects. I've made about ten Seminole prototypes for editions of ten to fifteen dolls." As McNichols delved into Seminole customs, she became curious about other tribes and started making dolls from other Indian nations. "I developed a love for ethnic dolls," she explains, "and as one doll leads to another, I am usually planning my next project before I'm at the end of the last one. I consider it an honor to express the proud heritage of such noble people."

Alexander and Marina Royzman make beautiful portrait dolls that reflect their makers' Russian heritage and experiences in their recently adopted country, the United States. Before coming to America in 1990, the Royzmans had creative careers in Russia, Alexander Royzman in cinematography and Marina Royzman in book illustration. Although they were not dollmakers, dolls were part of their lives, for Alexander Royzman occasionally included dolls in his movies and photographs, including a series, *Children and Dolls,* that was exhibited throughout Russia. The Royzmans began to experiment with making dolls, using some of them in sets they designed. Once they were in America, the Royzmans hit upon the idea of making portrait dolls of the great performers in Russian ballets as a way of preserving their heritage. "We wanted to show the beauty and elasticity of the human body and capture the spirit of the ballet," the Royzmans explain. They worked from old engravings and photographs along with ballet programs from many

Plate 15
Ann McNichols,
The Deaconess,
20 in. (50.8 cm), 1991

countries. At first they had little money for materials. Marina Royzman remembers the early days with a smile. "In the beginning of our dollmaking career—which was also the beginning of our life here—we had to find inexpensive materials. We decided to sew the doll bodies out of cloth and to use Sculpey for the heads, arms and legs. To fashion a body with a needle and thread was challenging, but soon, we fell in love with fabrics and textures."

The outstanding performances and the exciting life of Vaslav Nijinsky inspired the Royzmans to depict him in the famous ballet, *Le Spectre de la Rose*. They were determined to portray him as a dancer who revolutionized the sense of rhythm in the ballet. An aura of voluptuousness and the almost discernible scent of roses attests to the Royzmans' skill in costuming as well as their ability to capture a pose. "We worked from many pictures," Marina Royzman explains, pausing to find just the right words in English. "We chose a pose that we considered the most graceful, one that showed Nijinsky at the top of his form. While we wanted to be exact, we also wanted to add our feelings to the piece." For the costume the Royzmans selected the most luxurious silks, embellished with gold thread embroidery. The sensuous silk-chiffon roses are surrounded by hand-painted leaves that at first presented a challenge to the Royzmans. "We wanted them to stay in position, not to fall limply," Marina Royzman says, "and we came up with the idea of using spray starch to keep them in place. This was particularly important in the garland. After we had the garland in place, we thought the leaves needed more highlighting, so we painted on various colors until we achieved a more luminous quality." When *Vaslav Nijinsky* (plate 10) was finished to their satisfaction, it was evident that as a cloth sculpture he would attract the plaudits and sighs of admiration that the actual Nijinsky received on stage.

In England Paul Crees and Peter Coe also see the world as a stage and devote their lives to creating portraits celebrating its players. Their many admirers believe the British dollmaking team have coaxed the art of wax portraiture into a new realm. Comparing their creations with such legendary Victorian artists as Pierotti, Marsh, and Montanari, collectors eagerly await each new edition of the celebrity-inspired dolls. Since editions are small (never more than fifty and usually only ten to twenty pieces), competition is fierce for Crees and Coe's lifelike interpretations of such captivating women as Vivien Leigh, Barbra Streisand, and Elizabeth Taylor. "I've always loved glamour," Crees points out, in explaining his preoccupation with the stars. "It probably stemmed from growing up in the drab confines of postwar England and burying myself in the